

## Parrot Feather Removal Project

### Summer 2006

After reading an invasive non-native species article in Mass Wildlife, Fairhaven resident, Sallie Johnson alerted state officials to the possible presence of Parrot Feather in a small pond in her town. Biologists from the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Lakes and Ponds Program, Natural Heritage's Endangered Species Program and former Representative Mark Howland visited the pond to confirm the presence of the species and determine the extent of the infestation.

Parrot Feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*), a favorite water garden species, is a member of the Watermilfoil (Haloragaceae) family, and although native to South America, is now found on every continent except Antarctica. Like most non-native invasive aquatic species, Parrot Feather is a competitive plant that is capable of rapid growth and spread, to the complete exclusion of other native plants and animals. The dense plant growth can impede fishing, boating, swimming and other activities and the loss of recreational and aesthetic value can cause a decline in surrounding lake property value.

Although there are documented populations of Parrot Feather in neighboring states, there are currently no other known infestations of Parrot Feather in the Commonwealth. The Lakes and Ponds Program implemented a rapid response plan to remove the Parrot Feather from the Fairhaven pond and thereby protect other waterbodies statewide. By working closely with the Fairhaven Conservation Commission, Fairhaven Department of Public Works and Aquatic Control Technologies, permits were obtained to treat the pond.

The plan was implemented this summer, and data from follow up site visits show that the treatment was successful. However, there are volunteers in place to continually monitor the pond, and remove any surviving fragments before they have a chance to re-infest the pond. Monitors will also routinely survey the pond to make sure that no additional non-native species enter the pond undetected and become established.

### Have you seen this plant?

Parrot Feather appears as a blue-green carpet of growth on the surface of the water. Emergent leaves are bright blue-green, 1-2" long, rigid, deeply serrated and profuse. Leaves are arranged in whorls of 4-6 around the stem and each leaf has 10-18 segments. Emergent leaves may protrude a foot above the water's surface, looking like miniature fir trees. Submerged leaves are reddish and feathered with 20-30 segments per leaf. They frequently appear to be decaying and are often confused with Eurasian Milfoil leaves. The woody stems can grow over five feet long, often extending outward onto the bank or shore. For more information on Parrot Feather view the sheet

[www.mass.gov/dcr/waterSupply/lakepond/factsheet/parrot\\_feather.doc](http://www.mass.gov/dcr/waterSupply/lakepond/factsheet/parrot_feather.doc)

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